

Letters to the Editor

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College education important

When I read SMA Kidd's comments in the Jan. 23 *Army Times*, about the Council of CSMs' recommendation for less emphasis on college credits, I wonder if they really want to return to the uneducated enlisted/NCO Corps of the 1960s? I agree 100 percent that more emphasis is needed on MOS skills. I know some senior NCOs from the 25V MOS who can't turn on a video camera, much less produce a video program, but have memorized the (now defunct) SDT manual and scored well!

My wife and I are Army NCOs who have worked, struggled, sacrificed and completed college degrees while on active duty. To say that college courses distract soldiers from concentrating on their military duties is false. I took 90 percent of my classes and my wife took 100 percent of her classes during off-duty hours. I never had a complaint from my supervisors or subordinates about the "lack of concentration on my military duties," because I took an extra 45 minutes for a lunchtime class. In fact, I received praise for trying to better myself. The extra hours I put in on missions and extra military duties more than made up for the 45 minutes.

Soldiers shouldn't go to college just to earn promotion points. The brain, like the rest of the human body, needs exercise. That exercise is called education. Education helps one to reason out, research and solve problems thoroughly.

NCOES classes are valuable tools in

educating a soldier on military skills, but a person needs more than just a military education. After all, soldiers won't spend their entire lives in the Army.

I counsel and do all I can to help soldiers take college courses. For me, there are *no excuses* for not taking classes.

I wonder what the real reason is for de-emphasizing college credits. Is tuition assistance breaking the Army's budget? Are soldiers using college courses for an excuse not to deploy? Or could it be that while the military hierarchy praises soldiers on how proud they are of education levels achieved, they're really afraid their soldiers are becoming more educated and need to tackle more responsibility?

Please place job knowledge and performance on a higher level for a potential promotion, but don't lessen the impact and importance of a college education for the soldier.

SSG Ronald C. Bingham
2nd Signal Bde, Germany

Drawdown presents opportunity to hone basic survival skills

Redirecting our focus during the drawdown to basic soldiering skills will be a mainstay of the NCO Corps during these times of operations other than war.

We must teach our soldiers from the appropriate manuals if we are to properly develop these young leaders. It's also important that NCOs be able to interpret this information.

Stick with the basic fundamentals of soldiering—physical fitness, basic rifle marksmanship, drill and ceremony, military courtesy and common skills—and it will pay off in the long run.

We need to stay with these basics even with the ever-changing attitudes our newly enlisted soldiers bring with them. Problems occur when leaders cannot meet the challenge of dealing proficiently with these soldiers and the soldiers can sense the flaws in us.

We must continue to mentor and give guidance to these young men and women. At the same time, we must stick with the basic soldiering skills—those dwindling skills that are so badly needed in our Army today.

SSG Reginald La Grone
Ft. Sill, OK

Fitness requires coordinated program

The umbrella rule of getting in shape is to never expect excess weight to leave a particular area. In the first place, there are no spot exercises. Second, any program for improving your physical fitness or shape must include more than merely exercises; it requires a coordinated program of training, diet and a change of lifestyle. To solve your problem, you need to analyze each of these facets to see how you can improve.

SSG Duane Fish
B Co, 101st Armor
Albany, NY

Senior NCOs often think continuing ACCP waste of time

As a staff sergeant in the secondary zone of consideration for SFC I'm often asked by peers why I'm wasting time with the Army Correspondence Course Program (ACCP), since I'm no longer promoted on the points system.

True, ACCP often can be the final few points that promote that specialist to sergeant or sergeant to staff sergeant. But, promotion to the senior NCO ranks shouldn't be the end of ACCP studies. On the contrary, it's really the beginning.

If you look at the NCO career map there are quite a few more courses after promotion to staff sergeant. As NCOs, it's our duty to develop ourselves and our soldiers to the utmost of our ability. Not only should we be enrolled in an ACCP in accordance with the career map, our soldiers should too.

When I was a Long Range Surveillance (LRS) team leader, it was mandatory that I enroll new soldiers in the LRS ACCP. I monitored and counseled that soldier monthly on his progress. Once he completed the course, another was chosen, furthering his career, his knowledge, his promotion potential and his performance potential. I had more than one soldier promoted thanks to the points gained from an ACCP. Plus, for an NCO, completion of an ACCP is a bullet statement on the NCO-ER.

It's our duty to give our soldiers every training opportunity available to the Army and the ACCP is a valuable training tool available to everyone.

*SSG Mark S. Leslie
5th RTB, Dahlonaga, GA*

Dress right, dress nail polish bottles from largest to smallest?

As a single soldier living in the barracks I can relate (to CSM Dare's article, "Single Soldier Living," Winter 95, page 24).

There should be a standard for the barracks, but it should be consistent and fair. I agree with CSM Dare when he said: "It makes more sense to demonstrate trust and confidence in soldiers in all aspects of their lives rather than limited events such as tactical training."

If my 'home' is the barracks, as I've been told countless times, why is it I'm constantly treated as if the space I live in is a favor to me from the Army?

I know for a fact that the majority of soldiers living in the barracks are good soldiers who do their jobs well and deserve the space and privacy. And, I agree that soldiers living in a communal setting should have standards for cleanliness that promote a healthy environment for everyone. But, I think it's gone a little

far when you're told to "dress right dress" your nail polish bottles from largest to smallest.

If the building I live in is under the Single Soldier Initiative Program, then rules such as the one just mentioned seem contradictory to the program. I'm sure such rules aren't applied to soldiers living in housing.

*SPC Renee C. Houston
3/81 Armor Reg, Ft. Knox, KY*

RIMSRCIS—a 'mobile' Army acronym

While I was on a long drive to annual training, I began to run military acronyms through my head. They had always assisted me in the past to gather my thoughts and quickly assess combat situations from METT-T to OCOKA. I'd always had trouble in the past remembering the eight Troop Leading Steps in sequence and decided to come up with my own acronym by the time we hit the ground at Ft. Bragg.

What I came up with was one sentence consisting of eight words and the acronym of RIMSRCIS: *Realize It Makes Sense Reserve Components Initiate Success.* ♦ Receive the mission ♦ Issue a warning order ♦ Make a tentative plan ♦ Start necessary movement ♦ Reconnoiter ♦ Complete the plan ♦ Issue the complete order ♦ Supervise and rehearse.

Just repeat the acronym several times, write it out each time vertically, then fill in the words to the right of each letter and before you know it, it's carved in your brain to stay.

Good luck and I hope this will help my fellow NCOs and soldiers in the Reserve Army. Let it be known that we Reservists, as part of the "Total Army," are ready to deploy and respond aggressively to the challenges that lie ahead.

*ISG Kurt Kobel
810th MP Co, Tampa, FL*

NCOs at West Point

The article on West Point training (Winter 95) of cadets should be informa-

tive to soldiers in the Regular Army since the environment at the Academy is very similar to that of the Regular Army.

A great number of cadets at West Point have never been in the military and know little about the chain of command and how it operates. The TAC NCOs do an excellent job as liaisons between cadet life and that of the Army.

Many soldiers today are completely blind to the quality training these cadets receive and tend to hold a biased attitude toward commissioned officers. Exposing the leadership skills these future leaders receive can only benefit the NCOs and enlisted soldiers who will serve under their command.

*SPC Kevin Frazier
HHC, 63d SG Bn, ISC,
Ft. Gordon, GA*

Corporal agrees promotion system unfair

I totally agree with [CPL Thompson's letter to the editor, winter 95] on how the promotion system is unfair.

I've been in the Army now for six years and I've worked hard to get promoted, but in my MOS (telecommunications) I've got to max out in every area. I've worked in all areas of my MOS, including leadership positions as NCOIC of my facility and have had lots of responsibility. Now, if I want to remain in the Army, I'll have to voluntarily reclass to another MOS to be promoted.

How can you determine who's ready to be a leader (NCO) by the number of points acquired? While one soldier might work hard and demonstrate dedication and commitment to meet high requirements, another soldier in a different MOS isn't required to meet the same standards.

Although there are other factors that determine readiness for promotion, such as the promotion board, I also believe that doesn't show a soldier's true leadership potential, other than the ability to memorize. You can only really learn it by experience or application.

Other major factors should be excellent work experience and knowledge of

your MOS, maintaining standards and influencing others to do the same. Allow soldiers to be placed in leadership roles or situations and be evaluated. Keep standards high, but equal.

*CPL Priscilla G. Gonzalez
Ft. Lee, VA*

'Disgruntled' corporal fails to understand promotion system

I feel CPL Thompson [winter 95 letter to editor] makes only one valid point in his letter. As a college graduate, I'd never place my degree acronym in my official signature block, optional or not.

However, I don't think CPL Thompson fully understands the Army's promotion system or policy, unchanged since I joined in 1982. The point system isn't biased or unfair, and reflects the only true way to rank soldiers by MOS. If there was a standard point level to make sergeant or staff sergeant, the NCO would then most likely be transferred to a different MOS to keep the NCO Corps manageable. CPL Thompson makes reference to time in service (TIS), time in grade (TIG), MOS knowledge, required NCOES and recommendations by the chain of command. These are all now components of the Promotion System (AR 600-200).

In my opinion, CPL Thompson errs when he states: "Education doesn't make a leader." An NCO or future NCO who takes the time to pursue his/her civilian education *does* make a more effective leader. Education is knowledge, and the more knowledge a person has, the better he/she can be an effective part of the team.

As the Army becomes more competitive, civilian education becomes a more important factor. I believe in the near future, for NCOs to reach the grades of sergeant first class, master sergeant/first sergeant and sergeant major/command sergeant major, an associates degree will be required.

It's time our junior NCOs became proactive in their careers instead of waiting until this becomes a requirement. I encourage all soldiers to pursue their ci-

vilian education and I highly encourage CPL Thompson to look at the promotion system and the idea behind the system so he can become a more knowledgeable NCO.

*SSG Donald C. Kilgore, IV
Co D, 140th Av, CAANG
Los Alamitos, CA*

NCO-ER inflated, but best in the last 20 years

I wholeheartedly agree with [CSM May's letter to editor, Winter 95] about how inflated the NCO-ER is. But, I believe it's better than any previous edition in the last 20 years.

However, I disagree with his zero tolerance approach to the maintenance and accountability of monies and supplies. Until the Army decides to adopt a zero tolerance policy in this area, let raters decide.

*MSG Rick Brown
A Co, 306th MI Bn, Ft. Huachuca, AZ*

More on acronym corrections

I read the *Acronym error corrected* article, [Winter 95], about SFC Munoz improperly stating the acronym for PAC. As an NCO, I sat on a promotion/soldier-of-the-month board. The study guide for the board had several mistakes that even the senior NCOs asserted were correct.

1) The NBC decontamination agent STB was stated as Super *Tropical* Bleach instead of "Topical." What is this, bleach that comes from Equador or Panama?

2) The name for the web gear was an LCE for Load *Carrying* Equipment. I wish my web gear would *Carry* my equipment.

A soldier going to the board should be ready to justify any answer he gives through knowledge and experience. Too many boards consist of soldiers repeating memorized answers to memorized questions. These boards don't promote knowledge and understanding, just memorization. Is this a Pavlovian experiment of memorization and to be rewarded? Understanding is more impor-

tant than simple memorization.

*Thomas S. Prohaska
Redstone Arsenal, AL*

Don't pamper single soldier

In response to CSM Dare's opinion ["Single Soldier Living," Winter 95], I believe it's unwise to pamper the single soldier or worry endlessly about his self-esteem.

I was single during my four active duty years (1980-84). We did have rules, inspections and GI parties, but barracks life was tolerable. Besides, the barracks aren't meant to be one's permanent home. I would keep some restrictions, such as visitation and use of beverage alcohol and other drugs.

*SSG Thomas M. Muldoon
US Army Reserve, Bolivar, OH*

Raters—make quality bullet comments on performance

On the NCO-ER you see three ratings, right? How about five? There are two ratings you *don't* see and they're tied to the "optional" comments for success ratings.

Having served on numerous promotion and retention boards, I've learned that raters can say a lot about the soldier by providing comments for **All Success Ratings**. By a rater's comments on **All Success Ratings**, you tell me if this soldier is moving towards "Excellence," or backsliding to "Needs Improvement."

Once you establish this practice, then any board member can see the soldier's pattern of performance and his/her future promotion potential or need for elimination from service.

Raters, don't take the easy way out on Success Ratings. Give the soldier an honest evaluation by making quality bullet comments about the soldier's performance. You'll inspire some and maybe wake up the rest. Hooah!

*CSM John Lester
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East Point, GA*